

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1312

August 4, 2014

The Honorable Robert McDonald  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue Northwest  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

I want to congratulate you on your confirmation as our nation's 8th Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I commend your decision to take on this demanding post during a time of crisis and look forward to working with you and your staff to provide our veterans with the care they deserve.

As the son of a disabled veteran, and the brother of a Vietnam combat disabled veteran, I take the care of our veterans extremely personally. As a fellow veteran, I know you do as well.

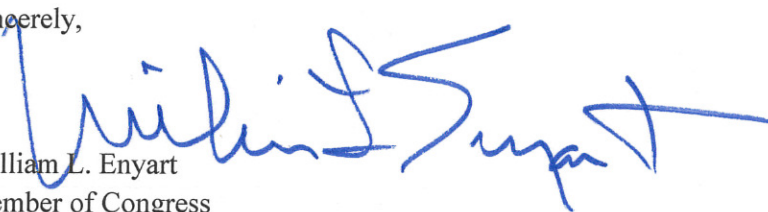
One thing I learned commanding the Illinois National Guard, there is no better way to understand a problem than to put boots on the ground. I would like to invite you to visit the facilities in my district, to visit with patients and staff, and see the situation for yourself.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the VA Hospital in Marion and outpatient clinics in Marion and Belleville. I had productive conversations with patients who spoke about their experience regarding wait times and appointment scheduling. Most patients I spoke with have had satisfactory interaction and experiences with the facility. Of the patients that experienced issues, many told me that excess red tape was to blame. During your visit, I believe you will find the Marion hospital is severely understaffed. Currently, they are trying to fill 200 open physician and staff positions to help serve the 43,000 veterans who use the facility each year. The outpatient clinic in Belleville faces the same problems; it is understaffed and has outgrown its current space.

My Congressional district in Illinois has the largest concentration of veterans in the state. A visit will give you the opportunity to speak to a diverse veteran population located near a major military installation, Scott Air Force Base, a large metropolitan area, as well as thousands of rural veterans.

Again, congratulations; I look forward to your response and working together for our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

  
William L. Enyart  
Member of Congress

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